

Message Text

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70

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 IO-12 EB-11 SSC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01

PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 GAC-01 MBFR-03 NIC-01 RSR-01

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R 151515 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3605

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

COMICEDEFOR

NISRA/ KEFLAVIK

CINCLANT

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L REYKJAVIK 0515

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV IC

SUBJECT: ICELAND FEDERATION OF LABOR CHAIRMAN TO JOINT CABINET

REF: A. REYKJAVIK 0443; B. REYKJAVIK 0461

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. BJORN JONSSON, CHAIRMAN ICELAND FEDERATION OF LABOR (IFL), HAS BEEN NAMED TO REPLACE HANNIBAL VALDIMARSSON IN GOI CABINET. JONSSON IS A VALDIMARSSON PROTEGE, PRAGMATIC AND NOT AN EXTREME LEFTIST. HE MAY BE EXPECTED TO PRESS ORGANIZED LABOR' S INTERESTS. HIS POSITION ON IDF IS NOT CLEAR BUT HE MAY NOT AUTOMATICALLY OPPOSE ITS CONTINUED PRESENCE. END SUMMARY.

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2. ORGANIZATION OF LIBERALS AND LEFTISTS (OLL) PARLIMANENTARY GROUP MEETING MAY 12 IN CONSULTATION WITH OLL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND PARLIMENTARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE NAMED BJORN JONSSON, CHAIRMAN OF THE IFL AND OLL ALTHING MEMBER, TO REPLACE HANNIBAL VALDIMARSSON IN GOI CABINET. NO DECISION WAS MADE REGARDING TIMING. VALDIMARSSON HAS INDICATED (REF B) THAT HIS RESIGNATION WOULD NOT BECOME EFFECTIVE UNTIL A SUCCESSOR WAS CHOSEN. JONSSON SAID IN PRESS INTERVIEW THAT HE WILL NOT ASSUME NEW DUTIES DURING MONTH OF MAY FOR PERSONAL REASONS. EXACT DATE WILL BE DISCUSSED WITH VALDIMARSSON. JONSSON SAID " I CANNOT SAY ANY-THING ABOUT HOW LONG I WILL BE A MEMBER OF THE PRESENT CABINET. TIME WILL TELL. I AM OF THE OPINION THAT WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT THERE WILL BE NO BASIC CHANGE IN OUR POLICY WHEN I BECOME MINIS-TER. I EXPECT OUR POLICY WILL REMAIN THE SAME."

3. EXECUTIVE BOARD OF IFL GRANTED JONSSON PERMISSION TO VACATE HIS POST AS PRESIDENT FOR AN UNSPECIFIED LENGTH OF TIME AND NAMED IFL VICE CHAIRMAN SNORRI JONSSON AS ACTING CHAIRMAN. SNORRI JONSSON HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE PEOPLE' S ALLIANCE ALTHOUGH HE IS NOT CONSIDERED TO BE AN ACTIVE COMMUNIST AT THIS TIME. HE IS RATHER PLODDING, PHLEGMATIC INDIVIDUAL, A LONG- TIME WHEEL HORSE IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT. SNORRI JONSSON' S ELEVATION TO VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE IFL AT THE QUADRENNIAL MEETING HELD LAST AUTUMN WAS ACCEPTED WITHOUT GREAT OPPOSITION BY THE MORE RIGHTIST LEADERS IN THE IFL. ALTHOUGH THE IFL WILL PROBABLY BECOME SLIGHTLY MORE PRONE TO COMMUNIST INFLUENCE, BJORN JONSSON WILL CONTINUE TO BE ALERT TO THIS POSSIBILITY AND SNORRI JONSSON' S STWEWARDSHIP MAY DEMAND INCREASED IMPARTIALITY, BEYOND REQUIREMENT OF THE POSITION.

4. BJORN JONSSON, 56, IS A LONG- TIME LABOR LEADER VERY POPULAR WITH THE RANK AND FILE AND CONSIDERED A MODERATE LEFTIST. HE HAS BEEN A PROTEGE OF HANNIBAL VALDIMARSSON BOTH POLITICALLY AND WITHIN THE LABOR MOVEMENT. HE HAS LONG BEEN CONSIDERED HANNIBAL' S HEIR APPARENT. HE IS QUIET AND UNASSUMING AND ENJOYS THE TRUST OF BOTH RIGHTISTS AND LEFTISTS IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT. HE IS ADEPT AT COMPROMISE AND IS A TOUGH NEGOTIATOR FOR LABOR INTERESTS. HE HAS BEEN RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT INCREASED POLITICAL POWER AND TURNED DOWN THE OFFER OF CABINET POSITION WHEN THE GOVERNMENT WAS FORMED IN 1971. HE MAY BE EXPECTED TO REMAIN LOYAL TO HANNIBAL VALDIMARSSON AND IN GENERAL TO DO

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HIS BIDDING AS LONG AS HE REMAINS IN ACTIVE POLITICS. JONSSON' S POSITION ON THE IDF ISSUE MAY WELL BE SIMILAR TO THAT OF VALDIMARSSON. HE RETURNED FROM A BRIEFING TRIP TO THE U. S. IN EARLY 1972 WITH A MUCH MORE OPEN MIND REGARDING THE IDF' S IMPORTANCE IN ICELAND' S DEFENSE. WE BELIEVE THAT HE WILL NOT BE AUTOMATICALLY SWAYED BY POSITIONS TAKEN BY THE COMMUNIST MEMBERS OF THE CABINET OR EVEN BY HIS FELLOW OLL MINISTER MAGNUS

TORFI OLAFSSON.

5. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF JONSSON' S APPOINTMENT BROUGHT AN IMMEDIATE
NEGATIVE REACTION FROM OLL RENEGADE DR. BJARNI GUDNASON WHO WAS
RECENTLY EJECTED FROM THE PARTY AND NOW SITS IN THE ALTHING
AS AN INDEPENDENT. IN A STATEMENT MADE ON RADIO AND TV
MAY 12, GUDNASON SAID THAT JONSSON HAS NOT YET BEEN APPROVED BY
THE CABINET TO REPLACE VALDIMARSSON. JONSSON' S RECORD HAS MADE
HIM " UNACCEPTABLE" FOR THE POST. GUDNASON CHARGED THAT JONSSON
HAS ACTED CONTRARY TO THE INTERESTS OF LABOR, HAS ENGAGED IN
UNIFICATION TALKS WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND IS
A " RIGHTIST." GUDNASON WARNED THAT IF JONSSON JOINS THE
CABINET IT WILL SPELL DISASTER FOR THE UNIFICATION OF LEF-
TISTS AND WILL BE " THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR THE
LEFTIST GOVERNMENT." GUDNASON INDICATED
THAT HE MIGHT REEXAMINE HIS SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND
CALL FOR A NEW GENERAL ELECTION IN THE FALL.
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*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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